



Smoke Alarms: What You Need To Know

Seattle Fire Department Fire Prevention Division

Who Should Have Smoke Alarms?

Every home should have at least one smoke alarm. In the event of a fire, a smoke alarm can save lives.

A properly installed and maintained smoke alarm will provide an early warning signal to your household providing the chance to escape.

Where Do I Install My Smoke Alarms?

Install smoke alarms on every level of your home, including the basement. Many fatal fires begin late at night or in the early morning. For extra safety, install smoke alarms both inside and outside any sleeping areas.

Smoke alarms are not hard to install. In most cases, all you will need a screwdriver. Follow the manufacturer's installation instructions. Since smoke and many deadly gases rise, install your smoke alarms 6 to 8 inches from the ceiling on side walls.

How Do I Keep My Smoke Alarms Working?

There are two simple steps to remember when caring for your smoke alarms.

1. Simply replace the battery at least once a year. The Seattle Fire Department recommends you change the battery in your smoke alarm when you change your clocks each fall.

2. Keep them clean. Dust and debris can interfere with how smoke alarms work. Regularly vacuum over your smoke alarm to keep it working right.

Why Does My Smoke Alarm Make That Chirping Sound?

The "chirping" noise lets you know the battery in your smoke alarm needs to be replaced.

What If the Alarm Goes Off While I Am Cooking?

Then it is doing its job. Do not disable your smoke alarm if it alarms due to cooking or other non-fire causes. You may not remember to put the batteries back into the alarm after cooking. Instead clear the air by waving a towel near the alarm, leaving the batteries in place.

If this happens frequently, you may want to move the smoke alarm to a new location.

When Do I Need to Replace My Smoke Alarms?

Smoke alarms should function properly for ten years. Like most electrical appliances, smoke alarms wear out. After ten years your smoke alarm will have been working for over 87,000 continuous hours. You may want to write the purchase date with a marker on the back of your smoke alarm. That way you will know when to replace it.

What If I Can't Afford to Buy Smoke Alarms?

The Seattle Fire Department can provide and install smoke alarms for owner occupied homes in the City of Seattle, when the home-owner is a senior citizen, disabled or living on a low income. If you meet the requirements of this program call the Seattle Fire Department at (206) 386-1337 to request assistance.

What If I Rent?

Your landlord is required by law (RCW 48.48.140) to provide you with a working smoke alarm at the time you move in.

If you need assistance working with your landlord the following organizations may be able to assist you.

➤ The Dispute
Resolution Center,
(206) 443-9603

➤ The Tenant's Union,
(206) 723-0500 or
1-800-752-9993

➤ The Washington
State Attorney
General's Office
Consumer Line
1-800-692-5086

